

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SELECT REVENUE MEASURES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRADE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE
MODERNIZATION OF CONGRESS

November 19, 2020

The Honorable Louis DeJoy
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20260

Dear Postmaster General DeJoy,

I am writing to express my concern with the continued delay in repairing flood damage to the Darrington, WA post office. At the end of September, flood water damaged the lobby, walls, and flooring of the post office, rendering it inaccessible to the public.^[i] A second flood in mid-October further damaged the facility. With a population of approximately 1,500 people, Darrington residents don't get mail delivered to their homes and rely on the post office to collect bills, medications, and other important mailed items. As a temporary measure, the United States Postal Service (USPS) is requiring that residents stand outside a side entrance to the building between the hours of 11 am and 4 pm on weekdays to receive their mail. It is nearing almost two months since these temporary measures have been implemented with no further details about when repairs will be completed.

This is concerning as we are entering the cold, rainy winter season, and I have heard from many constituents that have noted wait times of up to 20 minutes in cold, rain, and snow who have expressed frustration about the changes and lack of information from USPS. The lack of communication has led to speculation that USPS may permanently close the Darrington post office, which would be devastating to this community. My constituents deserve transparency from USPS on the timeline for repairs. Furthermore, given the frequency of inclement weather during these winter months, they also deserve for USPS to give due consideration to alternatives that expand pick-up hours and do not require residents to wait for extended time periods in bad weather.

As recently as November 14, 2020, a USPS spokesperson publicly stated in our local newspaper that USPS had no timeline for conducting repairs because USPS does not own the building and therefore it is the landlord's responsibility to conduct repairs.^[iii] I find this statement concerning because it is my understanding that the standard maintenance rider within USPS lease agreements states that if the landlord does not complete the required repairs within the USPS stated timeframe, then USPS has the right to complete the repairs and receive reimbursement from the landlord.^[iii] Furthermore, the standard maintenance rider also requires that USPS provide written notification to the landlord when repairs are required, and provide a timeline for

the landlord to complete the repairs. I also understand that USPS's repair classification system carries an expected timeline of 30 days for routine and urgent repairs, and 48 hours for emergency repairs. Therefore, it seems that USPS should not only have a timeline of when they expect repairs to be completed but also the ability to use enforcement mechanisms to conduct repairs themselves.

Therefore, I respectfully ask that you provide answers to the following questions:

- Please clarify your long-term commitment to having a post office in Darrington, WA.
- Has USPS considered any alternatives to the current temporary measures that require customers to wait in line outside? Please provide a list of all measures considered and the reasons for pursuing or not pursuing them. Specifically, please clarify if USPS ever considered temporarily shifting operations to another indoor space in Darrington.
- Please provide the dates for when the assessment of damages was conducted after both the first flood in September and the second flood in October, as well as whether USPS conducted the assessment or the lessor.
- Please state whether the priority status for the repairs were determined to be routine, urgent, or emergency, as well as the criteria that were considered in making that determination.
- If the lessor was provided with a notice of responsibility to repair damages from the first flood, please disclose when the notice was provided to the lessor and the communicated timeline for completing repairs.
- If the lessor was provided with a notice of responsibility to repair damages from the second flood, please disclose when the notice was provided to the lessor and the communicated timeline for completing repairs.
- If USPS's timeline for repairs that was provided to the lessor has expired, please disclose whether USPS has considered using its enforcement ability to conduct the repairs itself, and what factors were taken into account in this decision.
- Please state if USPS will post an updated public notice at the Darrington post office that clarifies the expected timeline for repairs. If USPS is not willing to provide this transparency for Darrington residents, please state why that is the case.

Thank you for your attention to this important and urgent matter. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress

[i] <https://www.heraldnet.com/news/water-damage-limits-access-to-darrington-post-office/>

[iii] <https://www.heraldnet.com/news/darrington-post-offices-limited-access-has-residents-peeved/>

[iii] <https://www.uspsoig.gov/sites/default/files/document-library-files/2020/19SMG012SM000-R20.pdf>